Pt. F. L. Jones 3/6

Major Brooke, Chairman Parade
Feb. 16. 1792

A

LETTER

ON THE GREATER NECESSITY OF

An ABOLITION

OF THE

AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE;

In consequence of the Insurrection at
St. DOMINGO, &c.

By a GENTLEMAN
LONG RESIDENT IN JAMAICA.

EXTRACTED FROM
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PREFACED BY

A Short Address to the Publick,

By W. M.

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To the PUBLICK.

THE following Letter is written in a ſtyle of candour and argument, which it is preſumed will recommend it to the attentive conſideration of every reader, deſirous to hear the voice of truth. The time is approaching, when, moſt probably, the great and ſolemn queſtion of the *Abolition of the Slave Trade* will again come under Parliamentary diſcuſſion; and it is much to be wiſhed that every well-informed and benevolent man, deſirous of offering his opinion founded on his knowledge of facts, may be previouſly heard. With this view, the Letter has been printed for diſtribution by ſome Friends of the Abolition, who, in ſo ſtyling themſelves, humbly truſt they aſſume no title that ſhould not be common; no diſtinction but that of friends of their country, and of human kind. In the preſent criſis, they muſt conſider themſelves as peculiarly accountable to the Searcher of hearts, the Righteous Judge of all men, for the part they take, and for the language they hold, under a firm perſuaſion that ſound policy and indiſpenſible righteouſneſs call aloud for an *Abolition*. Between truth and error there can be no medium—between a barbarous policy and continual danger, no ſecurity—between publick oppreſſion and publick guilt, no extenuation—between grinding cruelty and crying ſin, no poſſible diſtinction. The approaching day of another deciſion on a queſtion ſo awfully involved—a queſtion on the iſſue of which may depend the wretchedneſs or comparative comfort, of millions of fellow-beings, is a day of no common concern! Every ſerious man muſt look towards it with anxiety—and feel an increaſing ſolicitude for a favourable event; and he muſt deprecate a *protraction* of that event, as a continuation of national infamy and horror.

While theſe ſentiments neceſſarily agitate the publick mind, a ſtrong preſumption indeed comes in favour of the ſo-much-deſired abolition. Since the *late* inveſtigation by evidence before the Committee of Parliament, the ſubject has undergone a more general and more cloſe attention than ever. A detail of the moſt ſolemn and indubitable evidence can have left but little doubt in the nation, reſpecting the abominable cruelty of the preſent ſyſtem. Such has been the effect on the minds of a generous people, that few individuals can be found who would not be willing to ſacrifice, if ſacrifice were neceſſary, ſome private emolument to the general cauſe of juſtice and humanity. But ſacrifices of any valuable intereſt, do not *now* appear to be wanted. The ſubject, ſtripped of error and ſophiſtry, is *now* better underſtood. The chief ſacrifices to be made are thoſe of unprincipled rapacity in a few individuals, whoſe eyes have been blinded and whoſe minds have been diſtorted, by the deluſive influence of the God of this world. If, in the extreme of ſuppoſition, the intereſted arguments of ſuch men, who covet the precarious advantages of an infamous traffick, were to be allowed for a moment to have any weight, the degree of it muſt be tried in oppoſition to the immutable principles of honour, juſtice, and benignity; and, brought into ſuch a compariſon, the arguments of *Slave Traders* would ſurely be but as duſt in the ballance, and unworthy of regard! But when on the broad baſis of a ſound and righteous policy, every fair and rational argument is againſt the miſerable maxims of ſuch men, their complaints, if they dare any longer to urge them, ſhould be treated by every good man with a righteous indignation. If the commerce in ſlaves (ruinous as it ſometimes proves) were attended with no more than an ordinary profit, in connexion with the ſyſtem of ſelling to the planters, the ſanguinary and calamitous *conſequences* are too diabolical to be ſported with. If, on the contrary, the price of blood has been accumulated by inhuman individuals, and their families have been ſupported by it in a baneful voluptuouſneſs, let the pangs of devoted innocence, let the dying agonies of innumerable victims, at length be heard in their proper language:—"Think "the meaſure of our miſeries, and of "your abominations ſufficiently full, "O BARBARIANS!—be ſatisfied, O "CHRISTIANS!"

The field of honourable commerce is wide and open—even larger than ſufficient to employ all the active ingenuity, and to ſupply all the wants of man! Within thoſe bounds may it be the

glorious prerogative of a Britiſh Parliament, to reſtrain the efforts of Britiſh ſubjects! On ſuch principles it is impoſſible that a commercial people ſhould be unhappy or oppreſſed, or inferior on the ſcale of nations;—but on the principles of ſyſtematic cruelty, any country muſt not only be inglorious, but the inſtruments and the ſubjects of eternal calamity!

W. M.

To the Editor of the Univerſal Muſeum.

SIR,

I Rejoice to find that the abolition of that iniquitous and diſgraceful traffick, the *African Slave Trade*, is again in agitation, and have no doubt when the people of this country come to have a right idea of the ſubject, that it will meet with better ſucceſs than in the late deciſion of parliament. The recent calamities in the French iſlands is a freſh proof of the neceſſity there is for putting an immediate ſtop to this trade. Let not the oppoſers of the abolition exult at this event, as the conſequence of Mr. Wilberforce's deluſive philanthropy, as it is called; the day may not be very diſtant when the ſame ſcenes may be reacted in our iſlands, ſhould we continue to pour in ſuch multitudes of negroes as are annually imported into our iſlands, conſidering their weak ſtate, and the little attention paid to population among the whites. Every importation is an importation of ſo many enemies, who will eventually overrun the iſlands, ſhould the increaſe of whites not keep pace. Hitherto, for want of a right idea upon the ſubject, a great part of the people of this country have conſidered that by the abolition of the African Slave Trade was meant the emancipation of the ſlaves in our colonies, which they conceived was big with miſchief, injuſtice, and ruin. Such it would be; but it is neceſſary to inform them that the emancipation of the colonies was never meant, and that it is neceſſary they ſhould ſeparate in their minds and make a proper diſtinction between the two things. The Abolition then of the *African* Slave Trade, that is, the importing of ſlaves from Africa into our iſlands, which it appears from a multiplicity of incontrovertible evidence is not now any longer neceſſary, either for the exiſtence of the colonies or the farther extenſion of them, is what is meant; for it is a certain fact that the iſlands have of late years ſo much increaſed in population, that if now the aid of cattle and machinery, which were never uſed to any extent before, were called in, it would more than compenſate for any deficiency from a non-importation of ſlaves from Africa; and nothing will oblige the planter to bring cattle and machinery into general uſe, but the ſtopping of this trade. The people of this country, among other pretexts ſet up, have been amuſed with the idle tale that the plough could not be uſed in the iſlands; it is a fact, that wherever it has been uſed the crops have been abundant, the labour of the ſlaves leſſened nearly one half, and the planter enriched. The ſoil and ſituation of that part of the world is much the ſame as this; high and low lands, vallies, hills, and mountains; but ſome people artfully cry out, How can you plough the mountains? Theſe are unneceſſary for ſugar eſtates, and may be converted to purpoſes equally uſeful, ſuch as proviſion, cotton, coffee, &c. There is another objection ſet up by the planters, That the ſexes are not equal for the purpoſes of propagation: this will always exiſt if the importing of ſlaves be continued; for the planter will ever buy more men than women—preſent gain, and not the intereſt of poſterity, being conſidered; the men being better calculated to dig cane holes, (which cattle and the plough ought to do) and endure hard labour, than the women; ſo that what they ſet up as an excuſe, will continue to exiſt if the trade be permitted.* Another plea ſet up by the planters is, That the condition of the negroe is happier in our iſlands

* *The merchants and planters at their meeting at the London Tavern of the 3d and 8th of November, ſay, Reſolution* 11th, "*That their ſlaves are happy under their preſent maſters, &c. and under the aſſurance of additional relief when requiſite, by a continuance of ſeaſonable importations from Africa, &c.*" *Query, Would it not have been better to have ſaid,* "*By the introduction and general uſe of cattle and the plough to leſſen their labour?*"

than

than in his own country. Nothing ſurely could ever be more inſulting to reaſon and repugnant to truth, than this aſſertion. It is a fact which no ſophiſtry can controvert, that his ſituation is happier in his own country than abroad. If it were not ſo, he would rejoice to be taken away, and at the change; he would give no reſiſtance during the voyage, but look forward with cheerful hope for that happineſs in a diſtant land, which was denied him in his own: But the contrary of this is the caſe, elſe why do they chain the men on board?—This argument alone is ſufficient to confute the idle tale, that they are happier and more reconciled; neceſſity alone reconciles them, ſo far as they are reconciled. Is it not natural to ſuppoſe, that if they led that miſerable life in Africa, we have been told they do, that they would *rejoice* at being taken away? On the contrary, we ſee them, particularly thoſe advanced in life, pine away with grief, and even make away with themſelves, in the firm hope of returning to their own country, and to their friends in the ſtate they are in, and in this hope cheerfully meet death! Let any one contradict this, who is in the leaſt converſant with the iſlands! On this account *partly* the planter prefers purchaſing young people, as in the young and thoughtleſs deſpondency does not take that root, and they ſooner forget their cares. As a farther proof that they do not meet with thoſe puniſhments in their own country that are inflicted upon them in our iſlands, I never ſaw among new negroes the marks of ſtripes or whipping, which is ſo common among thoſe in the iſlands; and I have known them ſo ſimple and ignorant of this ſort of puniſhment, viz. caſtigation, that when firſt taken to be flogged, they have not known what it meant, until they felt the laſh. It is alſo the general opinion among them, that they are kidnapped or ſtolen: nay, even the Aſſembly of Jamaica have admitted this in their two Reports. They ſay, in Report 1ſt, 'That it is the opi-'nion of this committee, that the wiſ-'dom and authority of parliament 'might be beneficially exerted in the 'further regulations of the African 'commerce, in preventing the deten-'tion of ſhips upon the coaſt; in pro-'hibiting the purchaſe of ſlaves, who 'ſhall appear to have been *kidnapped*, 'or *deprived of liberty contrary to the 'uſage and cuſtom of Africa*, &c."—Here it is admitted, that many are ſtolen, and that they enjoy *liberty* in Africa. The tender care profeſſed here by a Jamaica Houſe of Aſſembly for the rights and liberties of the natives of Africa, is too extraordinary a circumſtance to eſcape the obſervation of the reader.

Thoſe who have given any attention to the publications on the uſe, propriety, and juſtice of the Slave Trade, will have obſerved, that of thoſe who defend the benefit, right, and juſtice, the moſt able, that is, the moſt artful, perceiving the impoſſibility of juſtifying our making ſlaves, or the encouraging others in the making ſlaves of thoſe who are born in a ſtate of natural or political freedom, either deny that the natives of Africa have ſuch rights, or alledge that they have forfeited them to the laws of their country by crimes, the puniſhment of which is ſlavery. Some deſcribe the governments in Africa to be univerſally pure deſpotiſm, or they argue as if they ſuppoſed them to be ſuch, and conclude that the ſtate of ſlavery in the Britiſh colonies is ſo much preferable to the condition our ſlaves were removed from, that the change is a real *bleſſing*. Long, on this ſubject, [ſee chap. i. ii. iii. b. 3d of the 2d vol. of his Hiſtory of Jamaica, under the head *Negroes*,] determined to lay a ſolid foundation for the wicked concluſions he intended to draw, ſuppoſes them ſcarcely, if at all, ſuperior to brute beaſts; the concluſion from which is, that they were meant for the ſlaves of men, white men to be ſure, or Indians; for, according to Mr. Long, Negroes are hardly men. Then having reaſoned them down to a level with the Ourang-Outangs; or rather the Ourangs up to, or above the Negroes; he proceeds to ſtate, that their government is ſo arbitrary, and their condition ſo abſolutely ſlaviſh, that it is a great melioration of their ſtate, to transfer to the condition of ſlavery, them and their poſterity, in Jamaica or the other iſlands.

Now we ſee it is admitted that there are free people in Africa, and an anxious care (riſum teneatis!) is taken by the

the legiſlature of Jamaica, to obſerve that the rights of *thoſe* free men ſhall not be infringed, leſt it might draw the *good* people of Jamaica into the dreadful predicament of having bought as ſlaves thoſe who had a right to freedom. Now, if one who has ſeen how negroes are ſold on board a Guinea-ſhip, were to read this paſſage of the Reports, and were to aſk thoſe conſcientious Committee-men this queſtion, "You ſee, gentlemen, how very neceſſary it is to guard againſt the kidnapping of free people of Africa, and until ſome care ſhall be taken in that particular, by the wiſdom and authority of the Britiſh parliament, pray how do you intend to guard yourſelf from partaking in the ſame guilt with the kidnapper? How have you guarded againſt it hitherto? I ſuppoſe you took with you a linguiſt, and examined thoſe you intended to buy ſome days before the ſale; or if that could not be, for it is impoſſible at the ſale, then I ſuppoſe on taking them home, you went through the neceſſary ſcrutiny, and upon finding that the negroe was born free, and had not forfeited his right to freedom by committing felony, of courſe you reſtored him to that liberty of which he was unjuſtly deprived." I ſay, were any man ſeriouſly to put this queſtion to the very men who framed that clauſe, they would laugh in his face. Let me ſpeak out:—A ſenſible writer, whoſe ſentiments I have given, ſays, 'That 'clauſe, and ſeveral others in the bill, 'are merely held out to amuſe the 'people at large in England; but in 'Jamaica has no meaning;' and I quote it to ſhew the low artifices which even a legiſlative body are obliged to ſtoop to, when to ſuppreſs what is true, and to affect what has no exiſtence, becomes neceſſary to ſupport the cauſe they are advocates for.

Among other curious clauſes in theſe Reports, is the following: 'It 'ſeems not to be underſtood in Great-'Britain, that the inhabitants of the 'Weſt-India iſlands have no *concern* 'in the ſhips trading to Africa: the 'African trade is purely a Britiſh 'trade, carried on by Britiſh ſubjects 'reſiding in Great-Britain, on capitals 'of their own; the connexion and in-'tercourſe between the planters of this 'iſland, and the merchants of Great-'Britain trading to Africa, extend no 'further than the mere purchaſe of 'what *Britiſh acts* have declared to be '*legal* objects of purchaſe.' Here then, it would ſeem, that the iſlands take no part in, and wiſh to exculpate themſelves from the odium of this abominable traffick, and caſt it on the merchants,* and Britiſh acts of parliament!—but which is worſe, the receiver or the thief? They have no concern in it,—if ſo, ſhould parliament heſitate a moment in caſting off this odium from a free people, take the iſlands at their word, and cut it up, as being unneceſſary? Theſe, and many other clauſes, ſhew to what ſhifts the Aſſembly of Jamaica was reduced, to wipe away an odium they could not but acknowledge. But in every ſtep they ſtumbled; and if any man will read theſe reports attentively, he will agree with me, that they have admitted every thing that this country has charged them with, and that their interference was neceſſary.

I ſhall now, Mr. Editor, endeavour to point out a few of the advantages, among a great many, that will accrue to the planter, and reſt it upon its utility.

It is ſurpriſing, and yet it is not the firſt inſtance, to ſee men oppoſing their own intereſt in the manner the planters have done in joining with the merchants in an oppoſition. It will prove the moſt advantageous thing to them on many accounts, and they know it; but ſuch is the influence of the merchants to whom the planter is in debt, and looking for further loans, that he has no voice of his own; indeed, in their preſent ſituation (with but few exceptions) they are mere *nominal* holders of property; the merchants of this country having generally mortgages to a great amount on their eſtates, and this is in a great meaſure owing to the African trade, as the planter is perpetually running in debt for negroes, in hopes of extending his views; for they have, in the earlier ſettlements of the iſland, (I

* *In their 3d Reſolution of the 8th of Nov. the merchants and planters aſſert, that they have been urged and ſtimulated to this trade under the ſanction of the legiſlature, and by its repeated acts and declarations. What is this but caſting the whole of the odium upon this country?*

ſpeak

speak of Jamaica, the great object) taken up and *monopolized* large tracts of King's land which they have in view of settling one day or other with Africans, but which are now useless. Nothing has been more injurious hitherto to the settling of Jamaica, than this monopoly; it has prevented the smaller settler from improving lands, and settling penns, (grass farms) which are of the utmost utility to the island, for they are settled with little labour and expence in comparison with sugar estates, which require large capitals; but the small settler has been prevented from this by the proprietors of sugar estates holding large tracts of land, which they will neither sell (while the quit-rents remain so low) nor settle.

There are a variety of settlements, the produce of which would contribute to the trade of this country, as well as sugar, that are settled and carried on at a small expence and labour, such as cotton, coffee, &c. Besides, by extending their grass penns, abundance of hides might be sent to this country, where they are become extremely dear. All these kind of settlements, I repeat, are made with little expence; an industrious man, with a few negroes, will, in a short time, open a vast deal of land for grazing; for, when once opened and planted in Guinea grass, it requires little else than tilling the pastures annually to keep them in order. Another great advantage that would arise to the planter in this way, would be the great increase, and consequent cheapness of cattle for carrying on the sugar estates; and such would be the plenty, that their negroes might be fed in part, if not wholly, with meat instead of salted herrings, which would hearten up their slaves, and give them strength and power to do more, and that with a willing mind; for when the body is well supported, the mind becomes capable of great exertions, without goading and whipping, (too disgraceful a mode of exciting men to labour.) We want no logic to prove this; every man knows it; — nay, the very brutes (if I may be allowed the expression) that are necessary for labour, know it.

These and many more advantages will arise from the abolition of the Slave Trade; but while that trade continues, such is the rage for sugar estates, that the old system will remain, and new estates must be settled by negroes, as ploughs cannot be used with ease in new tilled lands, on account of the stumps of the trees left in the ground to decay.

We have at present sugar estates enough settled to give this kingdom, and even others, as much sugar as can be consumed, at a *moderate* price. As a proof of this, witness that our islands are *now*, and since the dissentions in the French islands have been, supplying the Continent with sugars. Where then is the use of, or necessity for, our settling any more sugar estates, but to gratify the vanity and ambition of individuals? Are not cotton, coffee, and other articles, as useful to the commerce of this country as sugar, which it has been proved cannot be raised at so easy an expence? Besides, it would give elbow-room to people of small capitals to settle, and consequently population among the whites will increase, which is much wanted both for internal and external defence, and shews the wretched policy heretofore prevailing in that island. There has been a great defect in the system of that island, in not encouraging the small settler, owing to the above monopoly of land. What made Barbadoes at one time so populous; what brought America to the pitch it is, but an attention to this? For want of this, Jamaica is beholden to this country for *internal* protection against their slaves, whom they have been often in dread of, and by whom they have been more than once upon the verge of being destroyed; but had they a numerous and well-regulated militia, this could never happen, and this can only be effected by an attention to population among the whites; the great source for which will be the encouraging the small settler, by giving him an opportunity to purchase land. If this be not attended to, and fresh recruits of slaves are continued to pour in, I am too much afraid that, one day or other, we may fatally experience the same scenes that are now acting in St. Domingo. God forbid! I hope the planter's eyes will be opened to his own interest, and instead of blaming Mr. W. for a delusive philanthropy, take measures to prevent the fatal catastrophe.

Mr.

Mr. W. has not produced the diſſentions in France, nor did any act of his induce the ſlaves in Jamaica to rebellion, from whence it was a miracle that the whites eſcaped, long before the abolition was thought of, or at leaſt ſeriouſly taken up.

Another advantage that will ariſe from the abolition is, that many diſorders which the negroes bring with them, will ceaſe; that deſtructive diſorder the yaws, which is kept alive by the importation of new negroes, would ceaſe, and in time be as little heard of as the ſweating-ſickneſs; for in ſome of the old ſettled pariſhes, particularly Vere, where new negroes are not ſo much mixed with the old, it is hardly heard of.

You ſee, Sir, I have confined myſelf chiefly to the *advantages* (all of which I have not enumerated) that will ariſe to the planter from the abolition, without dwelling upon the iniquity of the traffic; and if ſo many advantages will ariſe, which cannot be denied, and ſo much good done, why heſitate a moment in doing away a trade ſo diſgraceful to humanity as this is? Is it that we are afraid it will hurt the revenue of this country, or is the *landed* intereſt in danger? This was an artful inſinuation of Colonel Tarleton, and a maſterly ſtroke; and I am afraid was the grand charm to faſcinate humanity—it was *argumentum ad pecuniam!* Touch my purſe, you touch my honour! But is Britiſh humanity come to this, to be ſubſervient to intereſt, and the artful ſtratagems of a few ſlave merchants?

Let me conclude by telling the people of this country, and particularly the ladies, the faireſt part of the creation, who ſip their tea, and prattle round their tea-board, that the blood of the poor African, and not that of bullocks, (metaphorically ſpeaking) refines the ſugar, which is ſo grateful to the palate as to lull to ſleep the nobleſt virtue of the mind, Humanity.

A FRIEND TO HIS COUNTRY.

P. S. It has been ſaid that white men cannot cultivate the lands in the iſlands—this I have my doubts about; but I will tell the planter what work white men may do. They can do all kinds of mechanical work, and take the places of all the negroe artiſans, who may be turned into the field; but this the planter will object to as a thing he cannot afford, becauſe negroe tradeſmen coſt him but little. Indeed ſuch has been the avarice and wretched policy of them, that they have often evaded and ſuffered almoſt to die away the Deficiency Act, an act manifeſtly made for the preſervation of the iſland, by keeping a ſufficient number of white men upon the eſtates; to evade this, I have known people given in who lived miles from the eſtate, and hardly ever upon it: But if they were to employ white tradeſmen to reſide conſtantly on the eſtates, ſuch as maſons, carpenters, ſmiths, mill-wrights, &c. they would always have a body of men ready to act upon any emergency. Inſtead of this an overſeer, and two, three or four book-keepers, are all the white people upon an eſtate, with two or three hundred blacks. Can there be any wonder if theſe people are ſome day or other cut off?